

## [Mysterious Chinese Tunnels]

Folk Stuff Dup.

FORM A

Washington

Carl E. Dupuis

Tacoma

Sept. 10, 1936.

'Mysterious Chinese Tunnels'

1. Oscar Cayton, Day Island, Wash.

Taken from files of Federal Writer's Project.

Folk Stuff

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Oscar Cayton, Day Island, Wash.

1. (Other information not obtainable)

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'Mysterious Chinese Tunnels'

William Zimmerman, 4305 S. L Street, Tacoma, Wn.

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V. W. Jenkins 2812 N. Lawrence St., Tacoma, Wn.

No other facts in regard to interview available.

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Carl E. Dupuis,

603 Washington Bldg., Tacoma, Wash.

December 19, 1938.

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### AMERICAN FOLK STUFF MYSTERIOUS CHINESE TUNNELS

(Copied from Folk-lore and Customs previously mailed ) ( to the State Office by Carl Dupuis ) .

During the period from the late 1870's to 1890 Tacoma grow from a village of a few hundred people to a city of 36,000 population.

The construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad required large numbers of railroad laborers, which included many Chinese coolies. After construction was completed the released laborers congregated in the growing cities of Puget Sound. The rapidly growing city of Tacoma received more than its share.

The Chinese went to work in the lumber and shingle mills, as domestics, and acquired a monopoly of the laundry business. Immigration of Chinese was forbidden by law, but they

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continued to arrive mysteriously, smuggled in on ships, and even /# Indian canoes, from British Columbia. This was a lucrative dark-to-dawn business for the white smugglers, who charged as high as \$100 a head for each celestial passenger. Some of the white employers were uncritical of this illegal traffic, as Chinese laborers worked cheaper and were more tractable than the white riffraff that graduated from the construction camps.

Some of the Chinese started small businesses, some of which were of a nefarious nature. Several opium joints were known to be operating in Tacoma. And there was no question in the minds of many people that the narcotic was smuggled in through tunnels from their dens to cleverly hidden exits near the waterfront. They were also convinced that the tunnels were dug by Chinese, either as a personal enterprise or at the behest of white men of the underworld, as no white workmen would burrow the devious mole-like passageways and keep their labors secret.

The Chinese were forcibly expelled from Tacoma in 1885, but ever so often the story of the Chinese tunnels bobs up whenever workmen come across them in excavation work. 2  
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When I came to Tacoma in 1890 the gambling houses, cheap variety theaters and honkytonks were still operating wide open, and continued to do so for sometime afterwards. They were not being run as lawlessly, however, as I had been told they had been in the 1880's.

Harry Morgan owned a gambling house, the Comique Theater and a bar, all connected, at South 9th Street and Pacific Ave. Avenue about where the Olympus Hotel now stands. In the back rear of his place he had screened booths on a balcony where loggers and sailors were served by Jezebels, and they were frequently drugged and robbed of their rolls. It was a tough joint, and the gamblers, bartenders and bouncers working for Morgan were a vicious lot. Morgan employed a fine band and he would have it play on a balcony over the theater entrance to attract crowds. He put on good shows in his theater and paid good

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prices to obtain good acts. John L. Sullivan Sullivan once gave a sparring exhibition on his stage. Sullivan Sullivan hung around the place for some /[#?] time associating with the sporting element and made quite a hit while he was here.

It was common talk on the streets that a tunnel ran from Morgan's place to the waterfront, and that it was used for smuggling Chinese at so much a head, narcotics and for shanghaiing sailors.

Morgan was supposed to /# be very wealthy, but when he died his common - law wife got only the jewels which he had given her. She tried to get possession of the rest of his wealth, but was told by Morgan's associates that there was only enough left to pay his debts. She accused those in charge of the estate of robbing it, but nothing was ever proven. She married Jumbo Cantwell, a huge man with tremendous hands, who was one of Morgan's bouncers and went with him to Chicago when Jumbo lead led the Tacoma contingent of Coxey's Army. Cantwell got the Morgan jewels away from his wife and she left him and returned to Seattle. Later Cantwell became a member of the city council of Chicago.

I was told that there was a tunnel from the-Waterfront to the St. Charles Hotel situated on the present site of the Elk's Temple, which was used for 3 smuggling in Chinese and narcotics.

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Reported by William Zimmerman, 4305 S. 'L' Street, Tacoma, Wash., September 10, 1936. Age about 67 years.

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In the spring of 1935 when the City Light Department was placing electric power conduits under ground, workman in digging a trench in the alley between Pacific Ave. Avenue and

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'A' Street at a point about 75 feet south of 7th Street, just back of the State Hotel, crosscut an old tunnel about ten feet below the surface of the ground. This tunnel was about three feet wide by five feet high, and tended in a southwesterly direction under the State Hotel, and in the opposite direction southeasterly toward Commencement Bay. I entered the tunnel and walked about 40 or 50 feet in each direction from the opening which we had encountered. There it went under the hotel the tunnel dipped sharply to pass under the concrete footings of the rear wall, proving that the tunnel was dug after the hotel had been built. In the other direction the tunnel had a sharp turn to the left, and after several feet, a gradual curve to the right, so that it was again tending in the same direction as at the opening. About 50 feet from the opening on the Bay side the tunnel began to dip and in another ten feet began to decline very sharply so that it would have been necessary to use a rope to descend safely on the met slippery floor. The brow of the bluff overlooking the waterfront is but a short distance from this point, explaining the need for the rapid downward slope, although it is probable that farther on there is a turn, either right or left, and that the tunnel was dug at an easier grade before emerging at a lower level.

Some persons contend that these openings found in the vicinity of Tacoma were caused by trees being buried in the glacial age, and after decaying, left the openings in the glacial drift. If this is the true explanation for the tunnel I have described , then the tree that made it must have been a giant that grow such in the shape of a corkscrew.

I was also in the tunnel which has an opening in the face of the bluff below 4 the site of the old Tacoma Hotel. I went into this tunnel about 150 feet after the hotel fire, and was stopped by a cave-in, evidently caused by the great volume of water used in extinguishing the fire. There is a branch in this tunnel, one leading straight toward Pacific Ave. Avenue and the other turning to the right. The right turn may have been a continuation of the tunnel we encountered at South 7th Street, but there was no possibility of verifying this.

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Reported by V. W. Jenkins, Engineer, City Light & Water Dept., who lives at 2812 N. Lawrence St., Tacoma, Wash. Age 39. Sept. 10, 1936.

In 1907, A. F. Graham and I made a thorough exploration of the Chinese tunnel which runs from Frazier's Swamp near Regents Park Addition to Tacoma. This tunnel leads in a westerly direction. This area around the swamp is known by many as the Chinese Gardens, although others say there never were any Chinese gardens in this vicinity. When we were there, however, in 1907, there were still the ruins of several buildings or shacks. The roofs had fallen in, but rotting floors and a few decayed studding of the sidewalls still remained. The surrounding ground also had the appearance of having been cultivated at one time.

We took with us several candles and a large roll of [seine?] twine, as we did not know whether there would be branches in the tunnel, and wanted to be sure how to retrace our steps.

We found the tunnel well constructed, timbered where the ground was soft and untimbered where it was dug through hardpan. At two or three points the tunnel was widened sufficiently to permit the erection of banks and there were rotted remains of wooden bunks still there. At these widened places we found several pieces of broken dishes, a few pieces of Chinese money and some paper-bound books in Chinese characters. We were careful not to touch the timbering, and proceeded carefully so we would not cause a cave-in.

We went in fully [one?-half a mile where we found the tunnel stopped by a cave-in. The tunnel up to this point was dry, but here it was wet, and the timbers, which here were necessary because of the soft earth, more badly rotted and had fallen down 5 blocking the tunnel. The cave-in was soft and mucky, so we concluded this part of the tunnel passed under swampy ground.

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Some persons believe this tunnel extends through to the beach on The Narrows, and that it was used for smuggling Chinese and narcotics, but so far as I know no opening on the beach has ever been found that connects with this tunnel. It is my belief that it was dug by Chinese to drain Frazier's Swamp so that it could be used for garden lands.

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Reported by Oscar Cayton, Day Island, Wash. Sept. 10, 1936.

Age about 67.